

Washington, D.C. - The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) today announced that it has extended the public comment period on the agency's Interim Final Rule regarding the use of Locomotive Horns at highway-rail crossings by sixty days. Testimony by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) before the FRA last Wednesday was influential on the FRA's decision to extend the comment period. Kirk testified that after initial review of the Interim Final Rule, several municipalities in northeast Illinois have raised serious concerns regarding the availability and accuracy of current data, several quantitative aspects of qualifying current and new quiet zones, and the subsequent cost to install Supplemental Safety Measures.

The extension comes as welcome news to Congressman Kirk, who will be holding a meeting Monday in Arlington Heights with FRA Administrator Rutter and several north suburban Mayors whose towns are impacted by the Interim Final Rule.

"I am pleased the FRA recognized the importance to allow our municipalities additional time so that a more thorough analysis can be completed," said Kirk. "I look forward to FRA Administrator Allan Rutter's visit to Illinois on Monday and working with all parties to find a balance between ensuring safety at highway-rail grade crossings and improving the quality of life in our communities."

The comment period was scheduled to expire February 17, 2004. Comments on the proceeding now may be submitted until April 19, 2003. The rule, which allows communities to impose train- whistle bans as long as the meet certain safety criteria, will take effect on December 18, 2004.